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Previous Cutbacks in Intelligence Cited by President in Beirut Blast

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MILWAUKEE, Sept. 26 — President Reagan suggested today that "the near destruction of our intelligence capability" in the years preceding his Administration had resulted in the lack of warning of the explosion last week at the United States Embassy in Lebanon.

The President's remarks, in answer to a student's question at Bowling Green State University in Ohio, marked the first time he had implied that earlier Administrations were responsible for intelligence shortcomings in connection with the incident. Mr. Reagan's Democratic challenger, Walter F. Mondale, has criticized the President as not having better safeguards against terrorism in Lebanon.

Mr. Reagan described the difficulty of trying to anticipate terrorist activities. Before his Administration, he said, there was a belief that "well, spying is somehow dishonest and let's get rid of our intelligence agents, and we did that to a large extent."

"We're feeling the effects today," Mr. Reagan said.

Democrats Defend Carter

Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan and other Democrats said the Carter Administration was not among those responsible. Mr. Moynihan, vice chairman of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, released a letter from the Director of Central Intelligence, William J. Casey, a Reagan appointee, in which Mr. Casey says, "The increase in personnel and budgetary strength of the agency began in 1979," under President Carter. Budget and personnel for intelligence activities were reduced under the Republican Administrations of the early 1970's.

Mr. Reagan offered his view after being asked by a student, Peggy Fitzpatrick, whether he would "have to beef up security" at embassies because of the Beirut bombing. He repeated past observations about the difficulty of stopping a suicidal terrorist, saying, "An embassy is not a bunker."

Then Mr. Reagan discussed intelligence as "the real protection, and where we're feeling the effects today of the near destruction of our intelligence capability in recent years."

"We're trying to rebuild our intelligence to where you'll find out and know in advance what the target might be

and be prepared for it," Mr. Reagan asserted. The Reagan Administration has raised the intelligence budget to more than twice what it was in 1979.

Intelligence specialists have said the task of tracking terrorism in Beirut was made much more difficult with the departure of Palestine Liberation Organization members, a major source of information on the city.

The President commented on the subject as he took his peace initiative to the voters, declaring: "We want it because peace in America is such an attractive way to live that a war is a terrible interruption."

Mr. Reagan smiled at his ironic manner of expression in providing this answer to another questioner at the university in a campaign appearance that he largely devoted to emphasizing his interest in peace.

Meeting With Gromyko

In the same format, Mr. Reagan stressed his hopes for success in meeting Friday with Andrei A. Gromyko, the Soviet Foreign Minister. However, he did not hesitate to doubt general Soviet intentions, saying that while the United States had no unfriendly designs, the Russians "really do have aggressive intent against us."

The campus appearance was one of the most exuberant of his campaign, with a cheering throng of more than 5,000 packed into the campus's Memorial Hall. Several hundred anti-Reagan demonstrators were kept outside the hall across from a larger crowd of pro-Reagan enthusiasts.

"U-S-A! U-S-A!" students inside the hall cheered as the President beamed. "Mondale-Ferraro! Mondale-Ferraro!" shouted demonstrators outside, barely audible. White House officials denied complaints that ticket distribution had been controlled to screen out anti-Reagan partisans.

"Hot Dogs, Apple Pie and Reagan," a sign in the hall proclaimed. Outside, a student protesting the President's plan for the MX missile carried a caricature of Mr.

capture of Mr.

Mickey Mouse twirling six-guns.

Mr. Reagan offered a message that mixed the themes of peace and preparedness, telling the students: "Uncle Sam is a friendly old man, but he has a spine of steel." More cheers came from the students.

Repeating the Word 'Peace'

In remarks that included the word "peace" 20 times, Mr. Reagan introduced a nearly pastoral tone to his campaign oratory, describing himself as eminently patient in awaiting cooperation from the Soviet Union. "We hold on," he told the students. "We remain prepared for peace. We know that we have an absolute moral obligation to try and try again."

"There are no cheap solutions, no easy answers," he said of controlling nuclear weapons. "The only path to progress on this is the open door, the honest proposal, and such a path takes patience."

The Russians' initial reaction to Mr. Reagan's initiative has been negative, but he exuded optimism today. "Each day the world is reborn," he declared. "Possibilities that yesterday didn't exist emerge and startle us."

Reagan campaign officials have made it clear that they consider this week, with its White House visit by Mr. Gromyko, as pivotal in their attempt to blunt the Democrats' charges that Mr. Reagan has baited the Russians through most of his term and aggravated tensions. On Tuesday, Mr. Mondale directly challenged Mr. Reagan's sincerity in his new peace initiative, terming it a "deathbed conversion" timed for the election.

At a second stop, Mr. Reagan visited the new high technology Timken Company steel plant in Canton, Ohio, as Democrats accused him of ignoring past promises to help the older, depressed steel mills of Youngstown. Mr. Reagan finished the day at a politically promising ethnic beer festival, the Family Oktoberfest here at Old Heidelberg Park.

"You know, the people of Milwaukee are as well known for their love of good beer as the liberal Democrats are for their taxing and spending," Mr. Reagan declared. "The difference is you know when to stop."

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